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Popular Greek paper that echoes Soviet views faces

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Both the publisher and editor of Greece's most popular newspaper, whose editorial positions often closely resemble Soviet views, have been charged with wiretapping the telephones of a New York Times correspondent.

The charges are the latest installment in the legal battle between Cypriot-born journalist Paul Anastasiades and the newspaper Ethnos, which began publication only one month before the 1981 electoral victory of Greece's Socialists.

In a 1983 book Mr. Anastasiades describes Ethnos publisher George Bobolas and editor Alexander Filipopoulos as KGB agents. In May an Athens appeal court convicted Anastasiades of libel and sentenced him to one year in prison. His

appeal to the Greek Supreme Court is expected to be heard in October.

But last week Athens district attorney Leonidas Lazarakos filed the wiretapping charges, basing them on a 1983 Ethnos article that contained verbatim extracts of a telephone conversation between Anastasiades and a man identified by Anastasiades as Athens lawyer Panayotis Zotos.

Anastasiades, who has confirmed that the excerpts published in Ethnos are authentic, asserts that "we were discussing my book, but Ethnos gave its own interpretation of the conversation." According to the Ethnos article, the conversation was between two CIA agents planning to destabilize Greek institutions and to extend "their destabilizing activities to other European countries."

In its introduction to the 1983 excerpts,

charges of wiretapping

Ethnos asserted that the tape of the conversation as well as many others were provided to the newspaper by persons from Anastasiades's "group of agents."

Although Anastasiades will appear as the injured party in the case, the charges were brought by the district attorney.

A release put out by Anastasiades asserts that his lawyers "will raise the possibility that persons acting under Soviet instructions were directly involved in the wiretapping, so as to obtain material for use by Ethnos."

Rumors of the paper's alleged links with Soviet intelligence began to circulate soon after it began publication and culminated with the publication of Anastasiades's book.

Ethnos editor Filipopoulos told a reporter in late 1982 that the paper was "an anti-imperialist paper," adding, "Ethnos,

because of its No. 1 rating, has incurred the wrath of various political groups, failed politicians, and the press business trust that sees its own defeat in Ethnos's triumph."

The general consensus among press observers is that the success of Ethnos owes less to its political content than to its tabloid format and its features.

Although the paper has the largest circulation in Greece with nearly 20 percent of newspaper sales, its real influence is difficult to determine in a country where total newspaper circulation is only 600,000, less than 10 percent of the population of more than 9 million.

Nevertheless most observers seem to agree that in a country where politics are the prime topic of conversation, the largest newspapers can at least flavor the tone of political debate.

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